How Democracy Works

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HARIJAN

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Editor : PYARELAL

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AN ALL-IN FAST

Two prominent Muslim Leaguers were relating to Gandhiji how the Indian Union Musalmans were eager to join the Congress. Gandhiji felt hurt. "I do not like this stampede to join the Congress," he told them. "They should — it is their right to join the Congress. But the time for it in my opinion is not yet. I would rather that they waited till the Congress was ready to welcome them with open arms. Today, that warmth is lacking. Under the circumstances, it would be best for them to serve the Congress from outside — even as I am doing." To another Muslim friend he remarked that he would stand up for Hindustani as the national language in spite of the decision of the Constituent Assembly to the contrary, even if he stood alone. Nor can I forget the moral indignation with which, talking about the accession of an Indian State, he told another Muslim leader that if it involved the sacrifice of any moral principle he would not care if,— leave alone that State — the whole of the Princely order acceded to Pakistan in preference to the Indian Union.

An India reduced in size but purged in spirit might still be the nursery of the non-violence of the brave and take up the moral leadership of the world, bringing a message of hope and deliverance to the oppressed and exploited races. But an unwieldy, soulless India would merely be an imitation, and a third rate imitation at that, of the Western military States, utterly powerless to stand up against their onslaught. He had no desire to outlive the India of his dreams. "We are steadily losing hold on Delhi," he remarked to still another friend, expressing his concern about the communal stuation in Delhi. "If Delhi goes, India goes and with that the last hope of world peace." It was intolerable to him that a person like Dr. Zakir Hussain, for instance, or for that matter Shaheed Suhrawardy should not be able to move about in Delhi as freely and with as much safety as himself. When a deputation of the Muslims of Delhi waited upon him setting forth to him their grievances, he immediately arranged a meeting between them and important Cabinet members in his presence and later the police chief saw them and promised them the fullest redress. But his agony continued.

That did not mean that he was indifferent to the sufferings of the minority community in the other Dominion. On the contrary, their sufferings only accentuated his impatience. He would have liked to be able to go to their succour — in Sind, in the Western Punjab, in the N. W. F. P. But with what face, with what confidence could he go there when he could not guarantee full redress to the Delhi Muslims ? He felt helpless and helplessness he has never put up with in all his life.

And so from the depths of his anguish came his decision to fast. Unlike some of his previous fasts, it is an all-in fast. As he has already stated it came to him in a flash. It left no room for argument, so much so that he gave no inkling of what was passing in his mind to Sardar Patel and Pandit Nehru who saw him only a couple of hours before the announcement of the fast yesterday.

"I have a lot to say against your undertaking the present fast," wrote a correspondent in a note addressed to him on getting the news of his decision to fast, "but I have had no previous warning..... My main concern and my argument against your fast is that you have at last surrendered to impatience, whereas the mission which you have undertaken is essentially one of infinite patience. You do not seem to have realized what a tremendous success you have achieved by your inexhaustible and patient labour. It has already saved lakhs upon lakhs of lives and could save many more still. But your patience seems to have suddenly snapped. By dying you will not be able to realize what you would have realized by conserving your life. I would, therefore, beseech you to pay heed to my entreaty and give up your fast."

To this Gandhiji replied : "I am not prepared to concede that my decision to undertake the fast was hasty. It was quick no doubt.... The statement was of the nature of heartsearching and prayer. Therefore, it cannot be dubbed as "hasty" in any sense of the term.....

"I did not need to hear any arguments as to the propriety of the fast. The fact that I did listen to arguments only bespeaks my patience and humility....

"Your worry as well as your argument are of no use. You are, of course, my friend and a high-minded friend at that. Your concern is natural and I esteem it, but your argument only betrays impatience and superficial thinking. I regard this step of mine as the last word on patience. Would you regard patience that kills its very object, as patience or folly?

"I cannot take credit for the results that have been achieved since my coming to Delhi. It would be self-delusion on my part to do so. Mere man cannot judge as to how many lives were really

saved by my labours. Only the Omniscient and All-Seeing God can do that. Does it not betray sheer ignorance to attribute sudden loss of patience to one who has been as patience personified right from the beginning of September last?

"It was only when in terms of human effort, I had exhausted all resources and realized my utter helplessness that I put my head on God's lap. That is the inner meaning and significance of my fast. If you read and ponder in your mind the epic of *Gajendra Moksha*, you might be able properly to appraise my step.

"The last sentence of your note is a charming token of your affection. But your affection is rooted in ignorance or infatuation. Ignorance does not cease to be ignorance because of its repetition among persons, no matter how numerous they are.

"So long as we hug life and death it is idle to claim that it must be preserved for a certain cause. 'Strive while you live' is a beautiful saying, but there is a hiatus in it. Striving has to be in a spirit of detachment.

"Now you will understand why I cannot accept your counsel. God sent me the fast. He alone will end it if and when He wills. In the meantime it behoves us all to believe that whether He preserves my life or ends it, it is equally to the good and we should act accordingly. Let our sole prayer be that God may vouchsafe me strength of spirit during the fast so that the temptation to live may not lead me into a hasty or premature termination of the fast."

On a previous occasion when the late Ali brothers had complained and asked him if it was not a breach of loyalty to his colleagues not to have consulted them before deciding to go on a twentyone days' fast, his reply was that it was not, for had not he and his colleagues pledged their loyalty to God? How could he be guilty of disloyalty to them while keeping his covenant with God? But both the Sardar and Pandit Nehru in the present case were far more understanding and full of sympathetic insight. Neither they, nor the Maulanasaheb and other friends and colleagues who saw him later, tried to strive with him but set about to tackle the problem constructively.

"Brave deeds and not vain laments — should be our motto," remarked Gandhiji to a sister who came to seek guidance. Equally characteristic was his reply to a Sikh friend, who saw him soon after the commencement of the fast yesterday. "My fast is against no one party, group or individual exclusively and yet it excludes nobody. It is addressed to the conscience of all, even the majority community in the other Dominion. If all or any one of the groups respond fully, I know the miracle will be achieved. For instance, if the Sikhs respond to my appeal as one man, I shall be wholly satisfied. I shall go and live in their midst in the Punjab for they are a brave people and I know they can set an example in non-violence of the brave which will serve as an object lesson to all the rest."

New Delhi, 14-1-'48 PYARELAL

REFLECTIONS ON SIND

Sind is known to be the land of Sufis. Shah Abdul Latif and Sami, Bekas and Bedil, Bhagat Kanwar and Dalpat have flourished in Sind and left in immortal verse their message of unity in diversity, of love and harmony exemplified in their own lives. The current of Sufi thought has trickled down to the mass mind and until recently, Hindus and Muslims were found worshipping in the same shrines and participating in a fraternal spirit in the same festivals. In almost every home, the Hindus worship Guru Nanak who taught fellowship of faiths. They are not caste-ridden and are known for their culture and catholicity all over the country. Untouchability as such hardly exists. Unhappily they lack cohesion and organized unity, but even this failing seems to have a sort of a causal connection with their cosmopolitan outlook and their comparative freedom from narrow communalism and provincialism.

Since 1937, however, with the introduction of provincial autonomy, the province has been drawn into the vortex of power politics. Communal electorates — that deadly gift of Britain to India — not only widened the gulf between the Hindus and the Muslims but drove a wedge into the ranks of each community. Extremists on either side, in their lust for power, began to woo the ignorant masses and inflame their minds against the forces of nationalism. After the general election of 1946 the Congress entered into a coalition with a sprinkling of Nationalist Muslims and though this coalition commanded a small majority, the pro-League British Governor invited the leader of his favourite party to form the Government. The position of the League Government was, however, precarious and it, therefore, moved cautiously. At the same time the League leaders used their power to consolidate their influence with Muslim masses and when a fresh appeal was made to the electorate early in 1947, the League party was returned with an absolute majority. It then threw off its mask and adopted a blatantly communal policy in all spheres — legislative, administrative and executive. With the announcement of the partition plan, the middle and upper class Muslims began to feel and behave as if they were members of the ruling race and the Hindus their subjects. Sind became the first citadel of Pakistan and Karachi received the dubious honour of being selected as the capital of the new State. The earlier pronouncements of Quaid-e-Azam Jinnah following his appointment as Governor-General, stirred new hopes — not unmixed with doubts and fears — in the minds of the Hindus. The situation, however, soon changed for the worse and the holocaust in the Punjab and Quetta brought matters to a head. Quaid-e-Azam Jinnah and his lieutenants now began to speak of an Islamic State and the hopes of the minorities for just and honourable treatment, based on common citizenship, were dashed to the ground. There was an outbreak of

communal frenzy in September, the target of attack being the Sikhs of the Nawabshah District. This had its inevitable repercussions on the Hindus and the exodus of the Hindus and the Sikhs began. The position was aggravated by wanton attacks on innocent passengers in trains, humiliating searches of evacuees and unlawful seizure of houses in the capital of Pakistan. So far out of a total of thirteen lakhs, over three lakhs of Hindus and Sikhs have migrated, the majority of these being original residents of adjacent provinces and States who had settled in the hospitable regions of Sind. The stream of migration continues, but it is hindered by lack of transport facilities. The Sind Government has also begun to realize that the wholesale evacuation of the Hindus will upset the economy of the province, but unlike the Government of the Indian Union, it does precious little to protect the minorities beyond issuing a spate of verbal assurances. Instead of putting down the lawless elements, it threatens to dismiss Government servants who send away their families on the charge of disloyalty! Without creating peaceful conditions it bans the migration of sweepers and washermen under the Essential Services Ordinance and issues warrants of arrest against the Harijan workers! On the top of all this have come the recent attacks, without any provocation, on innocent Hindus and Sikhs in Hyderabad and Karachi, attended by large scale killing and extensive loot. It must be confessed to our shame that the plight of our Muslim brethren in several parts of the Indian Union is equally sad and our hearts go out to them no less in the inhuman suffering inflicted on them by our co-religionists. This note, is however, confined to Sind and it cannot be gainsaid that Hindus and Sikhs can no longer live in peace and honour in that province.

No wonder, therefore, that even Gandhiji who is devoting every ounce of his energy to the restoration of normal conditions in both the Dominions has been forced by the compulsion of events to take a realistic view of the situation and has in his recent post-prayer talks underlined the urgency of evacuating the Hindus and Sikhs from Sind. The Government of India should, before it gets too late, take energetic measures, with what co-operation it can get from the sister Dominion, to provide full facilities for the immediate evacuation — on a voluntary basis though — of the Hindus and the Sikhs from Sind, special attention being paid to the poorer classes including the Harijans who are exposed to the danger of forcible conversions. We have the right to demand this. We have made no mean contribution to the winning of Indian freedom. We now feel, not without reason, that we have been left in the lurch as a result of the acceptance of partition by the Congress. Hence we demand, not as charity but as a right, that the Congress Government should rise to the occasion and accept courageously the logical consequences of the division. It should immediately proceed to arrange on a planned basis not only for the evacuation but for the relief and rehabilitation of members of the minority communities who wish to migrate to the Indian Union. As visualized in the recent A. I. C. C. resolution such plans should take into account the social and cultural affinities of Sind to the province of Bombay and the adjoining States for be it remembered, Sind was not long ago an integral part of Bombay and until yesterday, its educational institutions were affiliated to the Bombay University.

To the people of the Indian Union also, who had the good fortune to be born on this side of the border, we have a friendly appeal to make. We love Sind and love Mother India as well. It would be a wrench to us to be uprooted from our homes but our honour and safety leave us no other alternative. We now ask that all displaced Indians from Pakistan be welcomed as equal citizens — with the same rights and responsibilities as the original residents of the Union — and not treated as unwanted intruders. All of us must get rid of narrow provincialism which, like communalism, threatens to disrupt the unity of the Union.

At the same time the Sindhi Hindu must learn to adapt himself to the new conditions and to merge his life in the life of the province or State in which he is placed. He cannot both eat the cake and have it. Above all, he must strive to preserve intact the rich heritage of Sufi culture and refuse to lose his balance in the prevailing turmoil, as unhappily he did in Ajmer. The upper class Hindu must once for all shed snobbery and superiority complex and scrupulously refrain from offering *pugree* to monopolize housing accommodation to the prejudice of the just rights of the poor. He may not expect anything like the degree of comfort to which he was used. And all of us must prove our mettle and work hard in co-operation with our neighbours to contribute to the prosperity of the motherland and thus help to lighten the colossal burdens so suddenly thrown on her in the infancy of her freedom.

New Delhi, 11-1-'48 P. B. CHANDWANI

Racing and Betting

A correspondent from Madras writes a pathetic letter on the subject of betting on the race-course and holds that the two go together. If betting went, horse racing probably would fall flat. It is wholly unnecessary for the sake of the love of horse flesh to have horse races and all their attendant excitement. They pander to the vices of humanity and mean a waste of good cultivable soil and good money. Who has not witnessed as I have, the ruin of fine men caused by the gamble on the race-courses? It is time to leave alone the vices of the West and to strive to adopt the best that it has to give.

New Delhi, 12-1-'48 M. K. G.

HARIJAN

January 18 1948

HOW DEMOCRACY WORKS

(*By M. K. Gandhi*)

A valued correspondent has written to me two letters, one issuing a timely warning about the ill effects of hasty decontrol and the other about the possibility of an outbreak of Hindu-Muslim riots. I have dealt with both the letters in a letter which has become unexpectedly argumentative and gives my view of democracy which can only come out of non-violent mass action. I, therefore, reproduce the letter below without giving at the same time the letters to which it is in answer. There is enough in the answer to enable the reader to know the purport of the two letters. I have purposely refrained from giving the name of my correspondent and the scene of action, not because the letters are confidential, but because nothing is to be gained from disclosing either :

"You still write as if you had the slave mind, though the slavery of us all is abolished. If decontrol has produced the effect you attribute to it, you should raise your voice, even though you may be alone in doing so and your voice may be feeble. As a matter of fact you have many companions and your voice is by no means feeble unless intoxication of power has enfeebled it. Personally, the bogey of the shooting up of prices by reason of decontrol does not frighten me. If we have many sharks and we do not know how to combat them, we shall deserve to be eaten up by them. Then we shall know how to carry ourselves in the teeth of adversity. Real democracy people learn not from books, not from the government who are in name and in reality their servants. Hard experience is the most efficient teacher in democracy. The days of appeals to me are gone. The cloak of non-violence which we had put on during the British regime is no longer now necessary. Therefore, violence faces us in its terrible nakedness. Have you also succumbed or you too never had non-violence? This letter is not to warn you against writing to me and giving me your view of the picture, but it is intended to tell you why I would swear by decontrol even if mine was a solitary voice.

"Your second letter about Hindu-Muslim tension is more to the point than the first. Here too you should raise your voice openly against any soft handling of the situation or smug satisfaction. I shall do my part but I am painfully conscious of my limitations. Formerly I could afford to be monarch of all I surveyed. Today I have many fellow monarchs, if I may still count myself as such. If I can, I am the least among them. The first days of democracy are discordant notes which jar on the ear and give you many headaches. If democracy is to live in spite of these killing notes, sweet concord has to rise out of this seemingly discordant necessary lesson. How I wish that you would be one of the masters who would contribute to the production of concord out of discord!

"You will not make the mistake of thinking that your duty is finished when you have apprised me of the situation in your part of the country."

New Delhi, 11-1-'48

URDU HARIJAN

(*By M. K. Gandhi*)

Two weeks ago I hinted in the Gujarati columns that the *Harijan* printed in the *Urdu* script was likely to be stopped as its sale was steadily dwindling. Apart even from financial considerations, I saw no meaning in publishing it, if there was no demand for it. The dwindle to me was a sign of resentment against its publication. I would be foolish if I failed to profit by it.

My view remains unalterable especially at this critical juncture in our history. It is wrong to ruffle Muslim or any other person's feeling when there is no question of ethics. Those who take the trouble of learning the *Urdu* script in addition to the *Nagari*, will surely lose nothing. They will gain a knowledge of the *Urdu* script, which many of our countrymen know. If it was not for cussedness, this proposition will be admitted without any argument. The limitations of this script in terms of perfection are many. But for elegance and grace it will equal any script in the world. It will not die so long at least as Arabic and Persian live, though it has achieved a status all its own without outside aid. With a little adaptation it can serve the purpose of shorthand. As a national script, if it is set free from the bondage of orthodoxy, it is capable of improvement so as to enable one to transcribe Sanskrit verses without the slightest difficulty.

Lastly, those who in anger boycott the *Urdu* script, put a wanton affront upon the Muslims of the Union who, in the eyes of many Hindus, have become aliens in their own land. This is copying the bad manners of Pakistan with a vengeance. I invite every inhabitant of India to join me in a stern refusal to copy bad manners. If they will enter the heart of what I have written, they will prevent the impending collapse of the *Nagari* and *Urdu* editions of the *Harijan*. Will Muslim friends rise to the occasion and do two things — subscribe to the *Urdu* edition and diligently learn the *Nagari* script and enrich their intellectual capital?

New Delhi, 11-1-'48

TO THE PEOPLE OF GUJARAT

To

The Men and Women of Gujarat,

I am dictating this from my bed early on Wednesday morning. It is the second day of the fast though twentyfour hours have not been completed since the fast commenced. It is the last day of posting for this week's *Harijan*. Hence, I have decided to address a few words in Gujarati to the people of Gujarat.

I do not regard this fast as an ordinary fast. I have undertaken it after deep thought and yet it has sprung not from reasoning but God's will that rules men's reason. It is addressed to no particular section or individual and yet it is addressed equally to all. There is no trace of anger of any kind behind it nor the slightest tinge of impatience. But behind it is the realization that there is a time for everything and an opportunity, once missed, never returns. Therefore, the only thing that now remains is for every Indian to think as to what his or her duty in the present hour is. Gujaratis are Indians. So, whatever I write in Gujarati is addressed equally to all the people of India.

Delhi is the Metropolis of India. If, therefore, we really in our hearts do not subscribe to the two-nation theory, in other words, if we do not regard the Hindus and the Muslims as constituting two distinct nations, we shall have to admit that the picture that Delhi presents today is not what we have envisaged always of the capital of India. Delhi is the Eternal City, as the ruins of its fore-runners — Indraprastha and Hastinapur testify. It is the heart of India. Only a nit-wit can regard it as belonging to the Hindus or the Sikhs only. It may sound harsh but it is the literal truth. From Kanya Kumari to Kashmir and from Karachi to Dibrugarh in Assam, all Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Parsis, Christians and Jews who people this vast sub-continent and have adopted it as their dear motherland, have an equal right to it. No one has a right to say that it belongs to the majority community only and that the minority community can only remain there as the underdog. Whoever serves it with the purest devotion must have the first claim. Therefore, anyone who wants to drive out of Delhi all Musalmans as such must be set down as its enemy No. 1 and therefore, enemy No. 1 of India. We are rushing towards that catastrophe. It is the bounden duty of every son and daughter of India to take his or her full share in averting it.

What should we do then ? If we would see our dream of *Panchayat Raj*, i. e. true democracy realized, we would regard the humblest and lowest Indian as being equally the ruler of India with the tallest in the land. This presupposes that all are pure or will become pure if they are not. And purity must go hand-in-hand with wisdom. No one would then harbour any distinction between community and community, caste and out-caste. Everybody would regard all as equal with oneself and hold them together in the silken net of love. No one would regard another as untouchable. We would hold as equal the toiling labourer and the rich capitalist. Everybody would know how to earn an honest living by the sweat of one's brow and make no distinction between intellectual and physical labour. To hasten this consummation, we would voluntarily turn ourselves into scavengers. No one who has wisdom will ever touch opium, liquor or any intoxicants. Everybody would observe *swadeshi* as the rule of life and regard every woman, not being his wife, as his mother, sister or daughter according to her age, never lust after her in his heart. He would be ready to lay down his life when occasion demands it, never want to take another's life. If he is a Sikh in terms of the commandment of the Gurus he would have the heroic courage to stand single-handed and alone — without yielding an inch of ground — against the "one lakh and a quarter" enjoined by them. Needless to say, such a son of India will not want to be told what his duty in the present hour is.

New Delhi, Yours etc.,
Makar Sankranti, 14-1-'48 M. K. GANDHI

(*From the Gujarati*)

LUCKNOW MUSLIM CONFERENCE

The Indian Muslim Conference, held at Lucknow on the 27th and 28th of December, was a step in the right direction. In his presidential address, the first thing which Maulana Abulkalam Azad emphasized was that all political organizations formed on communal lines should be liquidated. The Maulana was only addressing the seventy thousand Muslims who had gathered to follow his lead. But the truth of his remarks applies equally to all communal organizations — Hindu, Muslim, Sikh or any other. As the Maulana rightly pointed out, nobody can object to organizations which merely look to the religious or cultural progress of a particular community. So long as we do not regard all life and property, without regard to religion, as equally sacred, we can neither have peace in this country nor maintain the glory and dignity of our respective creeds. All communal distinctions defeat the very object of religion and spell ruin to the entire society.

While expressing his well-known views on the partition of the country and on the two-nation theory, and advising all the Musalmans of India to join the Indian National Congress, the Maulana, in a gathering held with a particular objective, wisely refrained from raking up bitter memories or straying into the field of controvertial politics.

The Conference, in its resolutions, unanimously accepted the lead given by the Maulana. The resolution on communal organizations could well have been passed by any national gathering, with a few verbal changes. Maulana Ahmad Saheed, while moving the resolution, deplored the sad consequences of the propagation of the two-nation theory. Dr. Syed Mahmood rightly warned the Hindus and Sikhs that if any one community was finished, it could inevitably mean the ruin of all. Several speakers like Syed Abdulla Brelvi, Prof. Humayun Kabir and Maulana Hifzur Rahman suggested that the Musalmans should join the Indian National Congress *en masse*, also to help that body to maintain its truly national character.

New Delhi, 11-1-'48 SUNDARLAL

GANDHIJI'S POST-PRAYER SPEECHES

Birla House, New Delhi, 5-1-'48

Results of Decontrol

From the numerous letters and wires giving me thanks for the decontrols and pleading for more, I pick up the following written in English from a well-known businessman. He reduced to writing his thoughts at my instance:

"As desired by you I am giving below the following data about sugar, *gur*, *shakkar* and various other foodstuffs showing their present and past prices before decontrol:

	Present Rates	Rates prevalent during the month of November before decontrol of sugar was taken up by you.
Sugar	Rs. 37-8 per maund	Rs. 80 to 85 per maund
Gur Pansera	Rs. 13 to 15 " "	Rs. 30 to 32 " "
Shakkar	Rs. 14 to 18 " "	Rs. 37 to 45 " "
Sugar Cubes	As. 11 per packet.	Rs. 1-8 to 1-12 per packet
Sugar *Desi*	Rs. 30 to 35 per maund	Rs. 75 to 80 per maund

"Thus there is 50% fall in prices of sugar and its allied products.

Food Grains

Wheat	Rs. 18 to 20 per maund.	Rs. 40 to 50 per maund
Rice *Basumati*	Rs. 25 " "	Rs. 40 to 45 " "
Maize	Rs. 15 to 17 " "	Rs. 30 to 32 " "

Grams

Grams	Rs. 16 to 18 per maund	Rs. 38 to 40 per maund
Moong	Rs. 23 " "	Rs. 35 to 38 " "
Urad	Rs. 23 " "	Rs. 34 to 37 " "
Arhar	Rs. 18 to 19 " "	Rs. 30 to 32 " "

Pulses

Gram Pulse	Rs. 20 per maund	Rs. 30 to 32 per maund
Moong "	Rs. 26 " "	Rs. 39 " "
Urad "	Rs. 26 " "	Rs. 37 " "
Arhar "	Rs. 22 " "	Rs. 32 " "

Oils

Sarson	Rs. 65 per maund	Rs. 75 per maund

Woolen and Silk Cloth

"Due to decontrol of woollen and silken cloth the markets are flooded with silk and woollen cloth. The prices in silk and woollen cloth have fallen by 50% at least and even 66% in some cases.

Cotton Cloth and Yarn

"In anticipation of the decontrol of the cotton cloth and yarn, the prices are gradually falling. In the atmosphere created by the decontrol of sugar, the prices of cloth are also coming down. If cotton cloth is decontrolled altogether, the prices of cloth are sure to fall by at least 60% and the quality of the cotton cloth will also improve. Mill-owners will have to vie with one another. The supply will be available in abundance as is the case now with woollen and silk cloth which were decontrolled long ago. In case cotton cloth is decontrolled, its export to foreign countries may be totally prohibited for at least three years to make the decontrol of cotton cloth a thorough success.

"The jugglery of the departmental statistics should not stand in the way of the decontrol of entire food grains, cotton cloth and yarn.

Petrol Rationing

"The rationing of petrol was only a war measure and is no longer needed now. As a matter of fact it is only enriching enormously a few transport companies and they only want it. The teeming millions have nothing to do with it. Needless to say that the owner of one vehicle who has got a licence for even a single route is earning ten to fifteen thousand rupees per month on a single vehicle. If there is no petrol rationing and there is no monopoly system of the plying of vehicles, one vehicle owner cannot earn more than Rs. 300 per month. So much so that a regular trade is going on for the obtaining of petrol permits for vehicles. For a petrol permit for a lorry, a man can easily obtain rupees ten thousand by simply selling his permit to the transport dealer. If petrol rationing is removed, transport, food, cloth, housing and various other problems confronting the country at present will be solved. Petrol rationing and the monopoly system of transport are only enriching the transport companies, but have upset the lives of the masses.

"Do come to the rescue of suffering humanity by getting the controls removed. The country will become worth living not only for the favoured few but for the unfavoured millions. Controls were only war measures. They should have no place in 'Free India'."

The figures seem to me to be unchallengeable. This belief may be due to my ignorance. If so, the wise ones will please remove it by producing counter-facts which can be tested. I have ventured to accept the foregoing statements because they have found general support from those who are in the know.

Surely, timidity has no place in democracy when people in general believe in and want a particular thing. Their representatives have but to give shape to their demand and make it feasible. A favourable mental attitude of the multitude has been found to go a long way in winning battles.

India is said to receive only one per cent of the whole output of petrol in the world. That is no cause for despair or despondency. Our motors run in spite of it. Does it show that not being a warlike country, we need no more and that if we did and the petrol output remained stationary, the world would starve for want of petrol? Let the critic not scoff at my gross ignorance. I seek light. I cannot do it, if I hide my darkness. A pertinent question arises: if our quota of petrol is poor, how is it that the black market supply is inexhaustible and that unnecessary traffic goes on without hindrance?

The facts adduced by my correspondent are startling, if true. This control blesses the rich and curses the poor in whose behalf it is maintained. If monopolies are a fact and work in the manner stated, they have to go without a second's thought.

Cloth Control

As for cloth control, there is not a single argument to support it, if *khadi* which has been acclaimed as the 'livery of our freedom' has not gone into oblivion. We have cotton enough and capable hands enough to ply the *charkha* and the loom in our villages. We can clothe ourselves comfortably and without fuss and without heavy transport facilities. Our railways in the dead regime were first a military necessity, then for transporting cotton bales to the ports of export and distribution of calico manufactures imported from foreign parts. All this centralization becomes a superfluity when our hand-spun calico called *khadi* is manufactured and mostly used in our villages. Let us not swear at our villagers to conceal our laziness or ignorance or both.

Birla House, New Delhi, 6-1-'48

SQUEEZING MUST STOP

In his post-prayer speech on Tuesday evening Gandhiji said that he had heard that several refugees were still trying to occupy vacant Muslim houses and the police was using tear gas to disperse the crowd. It was true that the refugees were faced with great hardship. It was hard to lie in the open in the biting cold of Delhi. When it rained, tents were not sufficient protection. He would understand the refugees clamouring for houses, if they would not make the Muslim houses their target. For instance, they could come to Birla House and turn him and the owners including a sick lady out and occupy the house. That would be open dealing, though not gentlemanly. The squeezing out of the Muslims that was going on was crooked and ungentlemanly. To scare away the already frightened Muslims and then occupy their houses would not be good for anyone. He had heard that that day the authorities had offered some housing accommodation to the refugees elsewhere, but they insisted on occupying Muslim houses. This was a clear indication that it was not necessity which was the driving force, but the wish to get Delhi cleared of the Muslims. If such was the general wish, it would be much better to tell the Muslims to go, instead of driving them away indirectly. They should understand the consequences of such a step in the capital of the Union.

STRIKE PLAGUE

Gandhiji then referred to the news from Bombay that dock labourers and others were thinking of going on a strike. He appealed to all concerned, whether they belonged to the Congress, the Socialist Party—if the latter could be counted apart from the Congress—or the Communist Party to desist. This was no time for strikes. Such strikes were harmful to all concerned and to the country as a whole.

TRUE DEMOCRACY

Proceeding Gandhiji remarked that the Rajasaheb of Aundh had given Responsible Government to his people several years ago. His son, Appasaheb also had devoted his life to the service of his people. The Rajasaheb and some others had almost decided to accept the Merger Scheme. The Sardar had said that the *rajas* would get a pension, but Gandhiji believed that the Rajasaheb of Aundh would not care to be a burden on the people. He would want to earn by his service of the people what he got. The Rajasaheb had written to Gandhiji asking whether the *Panchayat* system that he had introduced in his State could not continue to function in spite of Merger. The Rajasaheb had been told that the form of Government in his State after merging must conform to that in the rest of India. In Gandhiji's opinion, there was no law which could stop a *Panchayat* from functioning wherever the people wanted it. Aundh may cease to be a State, it would not cease to be a special group of villages named Aundh. Every such group or its member could have the *panchayat* system whether the rest of India had it or not. True rights came as a result of duty done. No one could snatch away such rights. The *Panchayat* was there to serve the people. In the true democracy of India, the unit was the village. Even if one village wanted *Panchayat Raj*, which was called republic in English, no one could stop it. True democracy could not be worked by twenty men sitting at the centre. It had to be worked from below by the people of every village.

IMPORTS AND EXPORTS MUST BALANCE

In the end Gandhiji referred to a letter which a friend had written to him saying that in any happy and prosperous country, the imports and exports should balance each other. He, therefore, suggested that India should limit her imports so that they were a little less than her exports. If things went on as they were today, India would soon exhaust her resources. He, therefore, suggested cutting down toys and the like unnecessary things being imported. Again, up till now India had been exporting raw materials and importing finished products. That was bound to disturb the balance and impoverish the country in more senses than one. Gandhiji agreed with the correspondent that India should become self-sufficient as far as possible and that the trade between India and other countries should be based on the principle of mutual help and never on exploitation.

Birla House, New Delhi, 7-1-'48

A WRONG FAST

In his after-prayer address on Wednesday evening Gandhiji referred to a note received by him in which the writer said that he had undertaken a fast which would be continued. Gandhiji said that he considered the fast to be wrong. He was of opinion that during his life time those who undertook such fasts should consult him.

STUDENTS' STRIKE

Gandhiji had seen in the newspapers that the students in Delhi proposed to organize a strike on the 9th instant. He had told them the day before that this was no time for strikes. Strike by students, he considered generally to be wrong. He had conducted many strikes during his life, more or less successfully. But he could tell them that all strikes were not right and certainly not non-violent. If the students would listen to him, they would give up the idea of the proposed strike.

GRIEVANCES OF PAKISTAN REFUGEES

Next, Gandhiji referred to the visit of several representatives of the refugees from Pakistan. They asked him why he did not take more interest in the removal of their grievances. Little did they realize that he was in Delhi for that very purpose. But he was not so effective today as he used to be before the advent of independence. In the past he was the leader of India's non-violent rebels. Although everyone did not follow his advice, large numbers did so. Today his was a voice in the wilderness. The great teachers had said that one should go on proclaiming the truth as one saw it, even though no one listened to it. He was not running the Government. Those at the helm of affairs, it was true, were his friends. But he did not want anyone to accept his advice out of friendship or regard for him. They should do so only if it went home. If the Ministers and their secretaries and the lower staff including the police would listen to him, things would be very different. But that could not be. The Ministers had inherited the old machinery from the British rulers and they were making the best of it.

DUTY OF THE REFUGEES

The refugees were, however, entitled to food, clothing and shelter. They were their own kith and kin. It was utterly unjust that they should not get what, for instance, he could. What were they to do? He had told them that the only way was for all to gratefully accept whatever accommodation was offered. A grass mattress could very well serve the purpose of a cotton mattress. For the food, clothing and shelter supplied to them, they should do such work as was entrusted to them. A labourer could not sit at the table and write, but a man who had worked at the table all his life could certainly take to physical labour. If they developed the right mentality, India could easily absorb the few lakhs that had come and more.

HAPPENINGS IN KARACHI

They all knew of the happenings in Karachi. Although many people had said that Sind was quiet and people could continue to stay there, he had his doubts. His fears had come true. Not only the Hindus and Sikhs, but other non-Muslims also were not safe in Sind today. The Pakistan Government had said that they had been powerless to prevent the disurbances, but they were trying to suppress them as fast as they could. His advice to the Pakistan Government and to the Union Government was that if they were powerless to prevent the outbreak of violence, they should resign. That might make things worse for a while, but ultimately they would improve. The only condition on which they should continue to hold the reins was that things should begin to improve, however slowly. There should be no set back.

To the refugees and the Hindus and Sikhs in general, he would say that they must curb their desire for revenge. They should be neither frightened, nor become upset and panicky by the happenings in Karachi. The only correct reply to such a thing was cent per cent correct behaviour in the Union.

Birla House, New Delhi, 8-1-'48

Before the prayers started several slips were passed to Gandhiji by members of the audience. One of them had complained that he had sent a note the day before which had not been replied to. Gandhiji said that it was impossible for him to read all the letters that he received every day. If there was anything important, the friend should have repeated his question.

HARIJANS AND DRINK

Another friend referred to what Gandhiji had said about the Harijans and the drink habit. The friend asked why the Harijans should be asked to give up liquor while the soldiers and the rich continued to indulge in it. Gandhiji's reply was that the question was unnecessary. If the rich would waste money on drink, that was no reason for the poor to do likewise. There was no reason why anyone should copy the evil habits of others. So far as he was concerned, he was of the opinion that the upper classes had less reason to drink than the lower. The latter tried to drown their poverty and misery in drink. For the former there was no such excuse. It might be said that the soldiers could not do without drink. Gandhiji did not agree with that. He knew of soldiers, both Indians and Englishmen, who did not touch liquor. The prohibition laws would make no distinction between the rich and the poor, the Harijans and the others. But they should not wait for the prohibition laws to be passed before giving up the evil habit. Drink wrought more havoc amongst the Harijans and the labour class than any other class of society. Hence his special appeal to the Harijans to give it up.

WHY NOT SATYAGRAHA?

Another friend had asked him why he did not go to Pakistan. He said that he had already told them that he could not do so till things were perfectly all right in the Indian Union. As to another question Gandhiji said that it was in their hands to enable him to go to Pakistan. He would want to go there when Delhi showed a clean slate. The same friend had also contended that if *satyagraha* was a potent remedy for all ills, why it should not be tried in Pakistan. Gandhiji agreed that if the Hindus and Sikhs in Pakistan could resort to *satyagraha*, it would prove efficacious for all their troubles there. But where was that *satyagraha* today? He saw no *satyagraha* anywhere in India on any appreciable scale. Everywhere people wanted the police and military for their protection. We seemed to have displaced God and preferred the military.

NO COMMUNALISM IN THE UNION

The same friend had asked further that Pakistan was determined to drive away all the Hindus and Sikhs unless they remained there as serfs. Therefore, the writer said that unless all the Muslims or at least an even number left the Union, how could the non-Muslim newcomers be accommodated? Gandhiji said that an even number of Muslims had probably already left the Union. But there were large numbers of Muslims in the Union still. Seventy thousands had collected at the Conference called by the Maulanasaheb. They were the representatives of the Union Muslims. Were these Muslims to be driven away or exterminated? Gandhiji could never be a party to that. There was no bravery in such a course of action. Whatever others might do, he did not want the Union to become communal in its outlook. One should copy the good in others, never the evil.

PARTIES AMONG STUDENTS

Gandhiji then referred to a letter by some students saying that the proposed students' strike on the 9th was being organized by the Communist students, not Congress students. Gandhiji said that while he congratulated the Congress students who had dissociated themselves from the proposed strike, he would reiterate what he had already said about such strike, viz. that for the students there should be no party politics. There should be no socialist, communist, Congress and other groups among students. They should be all students first and last determined to gather as much knowledge as possible and that for the sake of the service of the people, not for the sake of getting jobs.

DEPUTATION FROM BAHAWALPUR

Lastly, Gandhiji referred to a deputation from the Bahawalpur refugees. There were also some people from Mirpur. Pandit Nehru came in while the Mirpur men and women were with him. Pandit Nehru assured them that all efforts were being made to rescue the Hindus and Sikhs from Mirpur. But there were insurmountable difficulties in the way. He was, however, trying to do his best for them. The Bahawalpur deputation said that while those from the West Punjab

and the N. W. F. P. etc. could apply for employment, the applications of people from Bahawalpur were being rejected on the plea that they were State subjects. They said that Sardar Patel had issued orders that there should be no discrimination of this sort, but still it was going on. Gandhiji could not believe it. He was sure that if any such thing had happened, it must have been the result of some misunderstanding somewhere. He would gladly inquire and tell their spokesman if he called in the next day. The members of both the deputations were restrained in their statements.

Birla House, New Delhi, 9-1-'48

NEED FOR BRAVERY AND PATIENCE

In his after-prayer speech on Friday evening Gandhiji said that he had met the head *pujari* of the *mandir* at Bahawalpur during the day. He had narrated to Gandhiji how a large number of the Hindus took shelter in the temple when the massacre started. They were not safe in this either and so they had fled by the back door along with the *pujari*. He said that he had tried to save as many men and women as he could, but he could not save all. He appealed to Gandhiji to do something for those left behind. Gandhiji assured him that he was doing all that was possible for one man. He had no power. The country having been divided into two, one dominion could not very well interfere with the working of the other. Times were such that each one of them must have utmost bravery and utmost patience. No one could dishonour men and women who were ready to lay down their lives for their honour and virtue. Death must come sooner or later. He appealed to them to shed all fear and have faith in God. He was All Powerful and not a blade of grass moved without His will.

PROBLEM OF HOUSING ACCOMMODATION

Some refugees had been to see him during the day. They were better off than many and had been able to bring away some money with them. Some Muslim friends of theirs had a house in Delhi. They had left Delhi and told their Hindu friends from Pakistan to occupy their house at Delhi. Now the Government had asked them to vacate it. The Government had the right to requisition any house. But they must see that the lawful occupants got some housing accommodation in its place. They could not ask them to go and sit on the road-side. The Government had to turn out those who had forcibly occupied Muslim houses. But the case he had mentioned was different and required different treatment.

A MISUNDERSTANDING

Gandhiji then referred to a letter in which the writer said that Gandhiji had remarked about a week ago that in Bombay people were getting one seer of rice per day in rationing. The friend said that the quantity was not one seer but one quarter per day. Gandhiji feared that the writer had made a mistake. If memory did not betray him, he had mentioned one seer per week. This was less than a quarter seer per day. How could any one get one seer of rice a day in these days of rationing?

WHY AT BIRLA HOUSE?

Another friend had written to him that many poor people could not come to attend his prayers on the Birla House grounds. He asked why Gandhiji was not staying at the Bhangi Colony as before. Gandhiji had explained the reason on his arrival at Delhi. But he would repeat it. When he arrived in Delhi, Delhi was like a dead city. The riot had just broken out and the Bhangi Colony was full of refugees. The Sardar, therefore, decided to put him at the Birla House instead. Gandhiji did not know if the Bhangi Colony was vacant now. Even if it was, he did not think it would be right for him to shift there. His main object in staying in Delhi was to give to the Muslims whatever comfort and aid he could. That object was served better by his staying at the Birla House. The Muslim friends felt safer in coming here than in the poor quarters of Delhi. Moreover, it was much easier for members of the Cabinet to come to see him at the Birla House as most of them were staying close by. They were all very busy men and going to the Bhangi Colony would require much more time than coming to the Birla House.

GENTLEMEN THIEVES

He appealed to the people to maintain peace in the Capital of India. He had heard that there were many thieves and thugs, who went about Delhi dressed as gentlemen. Such a state of affairs should be remedied without delay.

Birla House, New Delhi, 10-1-'48

NEED FOR DISCIPLINE

Prior to Gandhiji's post-prayer speech on Saturday evening, a man in *sadhu's* clothes stood up and wanted to read a note that he had written for Gandhiji. Gandhiji asked him to deliver the note to him, but the *sadhu* insisted on being allowed to read it in front of the audience there and then. It was after some argument that he at last sat down. In his speech Gandhiji said that it was an indication of the present deterioration that men who claimed to be *sadhus*, who claimed to practise restraint in all walks of life and studied the holy scriptures, should behave in that fashion. It was good that the friend had sat down in the end, but why should he have needed any persuasion and argument?

TO BAHAWALPUR FRIENDS

As Gandhiji had walked to the prayer ground, the refugees from Bahawalpur had staged a demonstration and shouted slogans asking for help for the 70,000 Hindus and Sikhs left behind in Bahawalpur. They became perfectly quiet when Gandhiji sat down for the prayers. Gandhiji commended their example to all. He had been told that the people from Bahawalpur would disturb the prayer meeting that day. He had not believed it and according to his expectation they had maintained perfect silence during the prayers. It pleased him to note how peaceful the prayer gathering these days were. The sufferers from Bahawalpur had given expression to their anguish in a restrained manner. He knew their sufferings. He assured them that everything possible was being done for the Hindus and the Sikhs of Bahawalpur. He had the word of the Nawabsaheb that though he could not bring the dead back to life, the remaining Hindus and Sikhs could live there in peace and safety. No one would interfere with their religion. The Union Government was also alive to its duty and was doing all that was possible. He wanted them to bear in mind that there was a far larger number

of the Hindus and the Sikhs in Sind including a large number of Harijans. They did not feel safe there. He had just read a telegram from Sind saying that what had taken place in Karachi was far worse than the newspaper reports led one to believe. His advice to them all was not to lose patience and courage. They should never accept defeat. The word "defeat" should be deleted from their dictionary. For that it was necessary that they should curb their anger and patiently think out their duty under the circumstances. He had been explaining it to them every day.

IRAN AND INDIA

Gandhiji then told the audience that the representative of Persia had been to see him that day. The Ambassador said that India and Persia had been very old friends, and that they were from the same Aryan stock. India, he added, was the biggest power in Asia and they felt great in India's greatness. The visitor wanted Persia and India to be bound in ties of genuine friendship. Gandhiji reminded the audience that Gurudev (Tagore) had been to Persia at their invitation and had been very pleased at what he saw there. He had said, "the Persians are our own people." The Persian Ambassador was anxious that the relations between India and Persia should not become strained in any manner. Gandhiji asked him what made him think of such a possibility. Then he told him that some Iranis had been molested and even killed in Bombay. People had gone mad. In the frenzy of the moment, some people might have injured some of the Iranis too as Muslims. But the Iranian Ambassador had assured him that the Bombay Government had taken prompt action to put down the trouble. He was very satisfied with the attitude of the Provincial as well as the Central Government. On behalf of his own Government, he assured India that although there were some people who wanted trouble in view of the exaggerated reports of the happenings in India, the Persian Government was watchful and did not wish to lose India's friendship on any account. He said that the Hindu, Muslim and Sikh traders in Persia were living in perfect peace and amity so far.

EXERCISE YOUR OWN JUDGMENT

Lastly, Gandhiji referred to a friend's letter saying that although many people had congratulated him on removal of controls, the measure was not an unmixed blessing. Gandhiji advised him to share his thoughts with the people. After all Gandhiji's eyes, ears and hands were the people. He had to rely on what they told him. Therefore, he could not ignore large numbers of letters and telegrams welcoming removal of controls. He did not believe that they were all inspired by selfish motives. However, he did want to know the other side too. He advised the people not to take anything for granted because he advocated it. If their own experience told them otherwise, they should stick to their own judgment in defiance of twenty Mahatmas. Then alone will they be able to make good the independence (if one could call it by that name) that had come to India.

Birla House, New Delhi, 11-1-'48

PEACE IN PRAYER MEETINGS

Today being Sunday, a much larger number attended the prayer meeting. The women and children were very noisy. Speaking after prayers Gandhiji said that it was only the day before that he had congratulated them on maintaining perfect peace during the prayer meetings. If the women must talk or if they had not trained their children to keep quiet during prayers, they should stand away from the rest so as not to disturb the prayer gathering. God was omnipresent and omnipotent. He was all merciful and long suffering. It was unbecoming to abuse His generosity by creating a disturbance in the prayer meetings. There was no fun, he said, in their coming to see the old man or merely to hear his voice. If they found some sense in what he said, they should try to practise it in their own lives.

A LETTER FROM ANDHRA

Gandhiji then referred to a letter from Andhra. He gave the following relevant extracts from the letter:

> "I hate to point out the shortcomings of an individual, but to shut one's eyes to the terrible consequences of the rot set in in the individuals of an organization like the Congress, noble in its origin and admirable in its achievements, would be heinous. This rot in the Congress is that of the peoples' representatives in the legislative bodies of the provinces who are the prototype of the rank and file. They are vociferous about stopping the wide-spread corruption, but they themselves resort to worse corruption. They take money from the people to get licences of every description, indulge in black marketting of the worst type, trade on the ignorance of the masses, and corrupt the sources of justice, and force the administrative machinery to get transfers for the administrative personnel. The people are crushed between these two sets of people. Two hundred and fifty of these legislators let loose on the people in a province without opposition are, in my opinion, the worst plague. Is it after all for replacing the White rapacity by the Black that many noble souls who are no more with us suffered and sacrificed everything worth living for in their lives? There must be an escape out of this morass. If these legislators are not so numerous, the evils would be less. Fifty members in the lower house and half that number in the upper house for each province which is going to be smaller on the linguistic basis would reduce the nuisance. Will the constitutionalists embody this principle of less the number the better in the constitution of our country and save us from the rapacious legislators and incidentally from top heavy expenditure?"

APPEAL TO PARTIES

He had a confirmatory letter from an old and aged Andhra friend from Andhra. Gandhiji appealed to all whether Congressmen, Socialists or Communists to live and work for the good of India. If they all ran after power, where would India be? They should think of the interests of the country rather than their own or of those of their friends.

SUICIDAL TENDENCY

Gandhiji then mentioned the visit from some Muslim friends. They asked how long they were to put up with pin-pricks. If the Congress could not protect them, they should say so in plain language so that the Muslims might go away and be spared the daily insults and possible physical violence. Those friends were speaking

for the Delhi Muslims in general. Gandhiji advised them to hold their place. He wanted all Nationalists not to mix religion with politics. They were Indians first and last in all secular matters. Religion was a personal affair of the individual concerned. Times were hard. In Pakistan the Muslims had gone mad and had driven away most of the Hindus and the Sikhs. If the Hindus in the Union did likewise, they would spell their own ruin. To try to suppress another was always suicidal. All right-thinking men should work against this tendency.

Birla House, New Delhi, 12-1-'48

GOD THE SUPREME COUNSELLOR

One fasts for health's sake under laws governing health, fasts as a penance for a wrong done and felt as such. In these fasts, the fasting one need not believe in *ahimsa*. There is, however, a fast which a votary of non-violence sometimes feels impelled to undertake by way of protest against some wrong done by society and this he does when he as a votary of *ahimsa* has no other remedy left. Such an occasion has come my way.

When on September 9th I returned to Delhi from Calcutta, it was to proceed to the West Punjab. But that was not to be. Gay Delhi looked a city of the dead. As I alighted from the train I observed gloom on every face I saw. Even the Sardar, whom humour and the joy that humour gives never desert, was no exception this time. The cause of it I did not know. He was on the platform to receive me. He lost no time in giving me the sad news of the disturbances that had taken place in the Metropolis of the Union. At once I saw that I had to be in Delhi and 'do or die'. There is apparent calm brought about by prompt military and police action. But there is storm within the breast. It may burst forth any day. This I count as no fulfilment of the vow to 'do' which alone can keep me from death, the incomparable friend. I yearn for heart friendship between the Hindus, the Sikhs and the Muslims. It subsisted between them the other day. Today it is non-existent. It is a state that no Indian patriot worthy of the name can contemplate with equanimity. Though the Voice within has been beckoning for a long time, I have been shutting my ears to It, lest it may be the voice of Satan otherwise called my weakness. I never like to feel resourceless, a *satyagrahi* never should. Fasting is his last resort in the place of the sword — his or other's. I have no answer to return to the Muslim friends who see me from day to day as to what they should do. My impotence has been gnawing at me of late. It will go immediately the fast is undertaken. I have been brooding over it for the last three days. The final conclusion has flashed upon me and it makes me happy. No man, if he is pure, has anything more precious to give than his life. I hope and pray that I have that purity in me to justify the step.

WORTHY OF BLESSING

I ask you all to bless the effort and to pray for me and with me. The fast begins from the first meal tomorrow. The period is indefinite and I may drink water with or without salts and sour limes. It will end when and if I am satisfied that there is a reunion of hearts of all the communities brought about without any outside pressure, but from an awakened sense of duty. The reward will be the regaining of India's dwindling prestige and her fast fading sovereignty over the heart of Asia and there through the world. I flatter myself with the belief that the loss of her soul by India will mean the loss of the hope of the aching, storm-tossed and hungry world. Let no friend, or foe if there be one, be angry with me. There are friends who do not believe in the method of the fast for the reclamation of the human mind. They will bear with me and extend to me the same liberty of action that they claim for themselves. With God as my supreme and sole counsellor, I felt that I must take the decision without any other adviser. If I have made a mistake and discover it, I shall have no hesitation in proclaiming it from the housetop and retracing my faulty step. There is little chance of my making such a discovery. If there is clear indication, as I claim there is, of the Inner Voice, it will not be gainsaid. I plead for all absence of argument and inevitable endorsement of the step. If the whole of India responds or at least Delhi does, the fast might be soon ended.

NO SOFTNESS

But whether it ends soon or late or never, let there be no softness in dealing with what may be termed as a crisis. Critics have regarded some of my previous fasts as coercive and held that on merits the verdict would have gone against my stand but for the pressure exercised by the fasts. What value can an adverse verdict have when the purpose is demonstrably sound? A pure fast, like duty, is its own reward. I do not embark upon it for the sake of the result it may bring. I do so because I must. Hence, I urge everybody dispassionately to examine the purpose and let me die, if I must, in peace which I hope is ensured. Death for me would be a glorious deliverance rather than that I should be a helpless witness of the destruction of India, Hinduism, Sikhism and Islam. That destruction is certain if Pakistan ensures no equality of status and security of life and property for all professing the various faiths of the world and if India copies her. Only then Islam dies in the two Indias, not in the world. But Hinduism and Sikhism have no world outside India. Those who differ from me will be honoured by me for their resistance however implacable. Let my fast quicken conscience, not deaden it. Just contemplate the rot that has set in in beloved India and you will rejoice to think that there is an humble son of hers who is strong enough and possibly pure enough to take the happy step. If he is neither, he is a burden on earth. The sooner he disappears and clears the Indian atmosphere of the burden the better for him and all concerned.

I would beg of all friends not to rush to Birla House nor try to dissuade me or be anxious for me. I am in God's hands. Rather, they should turn the searchlights inwards, for this is essentially a testing time for all of us. Those who remain at their post of duty and perform it diligently and well, now more so than hitherto, will help me and the cause in every way. The fast is a process of self-purification.

CALL TO SELF-PURIFICATION

I told you yesterday of two letters from Andhra. One was from the aged friend, no other than Deshabhakta Konda Venkatappayya Garu. I give here extracts from it :

"The one great problem, apart from many other political and economic issues of very complicated nature, is the moral degradation into which the men in Congress circles have fallen. I cannot say much about other provinces, but in my province the conditions are very deplorable. The taste of political power has turned their heads. Several of the M. L. A.s and M. L. C.s are following the policy of make hay while the sun shines. Making money by the use of influence, even to the extent of obstructing the administration of justice in the criminal courts presided over by Magistrates. Even the District Collectors and other revenue officials do not feel free in the discharge of their duties on account of the frequent interference by the M. L. A.s and M. L. C.s on behalf of their partisans. A strict and honest officer cannot hold his position for, false reports are carried against him to the Ministers who easily lend their ears to these unprincipled self-seekers.

"Swaraj was the only all absorbing passion which goaded men and women to follow your leadership. But now that the goal has been reached, all moral restrictions have lost their power on most of the fighters in the great struggle who are joining hands even with those who were sworn opponents of the national movement and who, now for their personal ends, enlist themselves as Congress members. The situation is growing intolerable every day with the result that the Congress as well as the Congress Government have come into disrepute. The recent municipal elections in Andhra had proved how far and how fast the Congress is losing its hold upon the people. The municipal elections in the town of Guntur were suddenly ordered to be stopped by an urgent message from the Minister for Local Bodies (Madras) after every preparation was made for carrying on elections. Only a nominated council was in power for, I believe, the last ten years or more and for nearly a year now the municipal administration has been in the hands of a Commissioner. Now the talk prevails that the Government would soon nominate councillors to take charge of the municipal affairs of this town. I, old, decrepit, with a broken leg, slowly limping on crutches within the walls of my house have no axe to grind. I no doubt entertain certain strong views against some of the Provincial and District Congress Committees now stand divided. And I have made no secret of my views.

"The factions in the Congress circles, the money-making activities of several of the M. L. A.s and M. L. C.s and the weakness of the Ministers have been creating a rebellious spirit amongst the people at large. The people have begun to say that the British Government was much better and they are even cursing the Congress."

Let the people of Andhra and the other Provinces measure the words of this self-sacrificing servant of India. As he rightly says that the corruption described by him is no monopoly of Andhra. He could only give first-hand evidence about Andhra. Let us beware.

My Bahawalpur friends I have asked to be patient. Sardar saheb saw me only at noon. Being silent and preoccupied, I could say or write nothing. Shri Shankar from his office was too busy to come so that I could not place your case before him and possibly save the Sardar's precious time.

Birla House, New Delhi, 13-1-'48

Gandhiji attended the prayers as usual this evening. He warned the audience against being surprised that he had walked to the prayer ground as usual. A fast weakened nobody during the first twentyfour hours after a meal. It did good generally to everybody who fasted occasionally for twentyfour hours.

The day following it might be difficult for him to walk to the prayer ground. But if they were eager to attend the prayers all the same, they could come and the girls would recite the prayers with them even though he was not present.

BAHAWALPUR REFUGEES

Gandhiji then referred to his written message of Monday. In that he had said that Shri Shankar of Sardar Patel's department would not come to see him because Shrimati Manibehn had said that he was busy. She informed him that there was some misunderstanding. She had only said that Shri Shankar could not come at 2 p. m. but he could at some other time. He was sorry that he did not correctly catch the message or forgot it. He had not taken it amiss that he was busy the whole day. He would not expect Government servants to go to private persons. As it was, Shri Shankar was ready to oblige him another time. He mentioned this incident only to console the Bahawalpur refugees.

WHO IS BLAMEWORTHY ?

A question was asked as to whom Gandhiji considered blameworthy for the fast. He blamed no individual or community. He did believe, however, that if the Hindus and Sikhs insisted on turning out the Muslims from Delhi, they would be betraying India and their own faiths. And that hurt him.

Some people had taunted him that he had sympathy for the Muslims only and that he had undertaken the fast for their sake. They were right. But all his life he had stood, as everyone should stand, for minorities or those in need. Pakistan had resulted in depriving the Muslims of the Union of pride and self-confidence. It hurt him to think that this was so. It weakened a State which kept or allowed any class of people who had lost self-confidence. His fast was against the Muslims too in the sense that it should enable them to stand up to their Hindu and Sikh brethren. In terms of the fast Muslim friends had to work no less than the Hindus and the Sikhs. Thus they were in the habit of singling out Pandit Nehru and him for praise and by contrast blaming Sardar Patel. Some twitted the Sardar for his remark that Muslim Leaguers could not become friends overnight. They should not blame him, as he did not, for the remark. Most Hindus held this view. What he wanted his Muslim League friends to do was to live down the Sardar's remark and by their conduct, not declarations, disprove it. Let it be remembered that Panditji though he had not the same method and manner as the Sardar claimed him as his valued colleague. If the Sardar was an enemy of the Muslims, Panditji could ask him to retire. The Sardar had

not ceased to be his (Gandhiji's) esteemed friend though he was no longer his "yes man" as he was once popularly and affectionately nick-named. His friends should also know the character of the Cabinet. It was responsible for every official act of every member of the Cabinet. He expected a thorough cleansing of hearts. That being assured, there would be mutual respect and trust. They were all of the Union and by right it belonged to them. He could not break the fast for less. They must dethrone Satan from their hearts and enthrone God.

Duty of the Hindus and Sikhs

What was the duty of the Hindus and Sikhs? They had just heard Gurudev's favourite song, "If no one responds to your call, walk alone, walk alone." Gandhiji liked it very much and it was sung almost every day during his walking pilgrimage in Noakhali. He would repeat with his last breath that the Hindus and the Sikhs should be brave enough to say that whatever happened in Pakistan, they would not raise their little finger against a single Muslim in the Union. They would never again indulge in cowardly acts, however great the provocation.

Delhi on Trial

If Delhi became peaceful in the real sense of the term, he would then break the fast. Delhi was the capital of India. The ruin or downfall of Delhi he would regard as the ruin of India and Pakistan. He wanted Delhi to be safe for all Muslims, even for one like Shaheed Suhrawardy, who was looked upon as the chief of *goondas*. Let all proved *goondas* be rounded up. But he (Gandhiji) was witness to the fact that Shaheedsaheb had worked for peace in Calcutta in all sincerity. He had pulled out the Muslims from Hindu houses which they had forcibly occupied. He was living with him. He would willingly join the prayer but Gandhiji would not expose him to the risk of being insulted. He wanted him, as he did every Muslim to feel as safe in Delhi as the tallest of them.

He did not mind how long it took for real peace to be established. Whether it took one day or one month, it was immaterial. No one should say or do anything to lure him into giving up his fast prematurely. The object should not be to save his life. It should be to save India and her honour. He would feel happy and proud when he saw that India's place was not lowered as it had become by the recent happenings which he had no wish to recall.

Birla House, New Delhi, 14-1-'48

Gandhiji had dictated a message to be read out to the prayer audience this afternoon, but later on he decided to go to the meeting and address the gathering. He said that he had come in spite of the doctor's objections. But from the next day he would probably not be able to walk to the prayer ground. He had the strength that day and he used it though the doctors had advised him to conserve it. He was in God's hands. If He wanted him to live he would not die. He did not want his faith in God to weaken.

Spate of Messages

Continuing his speech without any reference to the dictated notes, Gandhiji said, "Cablegrams and telegrams are pouring in from far and near. Some, in my opinion weighty and congratulating me on my resolve and entrusting me to God. Some others in friendliest terms appealing to me to abandon the fast and assuring me that they would befriend their neighbours irrespective of caste and creed and try to carry out the spirit of my message that accompanied the fast. I am asking Shri Pyarelalji to give a few selections, from the abundance which is hourly increasing, to the Press. They are from Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and others. If those who have given me assurances — some of the senders represent associations and groups — carry them out faithfully, they will certainly have contributed largely to the hastening of the stoppage of the fast. Shrimati Mridulaben asks the following question from Lahore, where she is in touch with the Pakistan authorities as also the common Muslims: "There are friends here who are very anxious about Gandhiji's health and are eager to know what Gandhiji would like them to do on this side and what he expects from his Muslim friends in Pakistan, including those who are in political parties and in Government service." It is pleasing to think that there are Muslim friends who are anxious about my health and more so to know that they are eager for the information that Shrimati Mridulaben seeks. To all senders of the messages and to the seekers in Lahore, I wish to say that the fast is a process of self-purification and is intended to invite all who are in sympathy with the mission of the fast themselves to take part in the process of self-purification, whether they are in the service of the Pakistan Government or whether they are members of political parties or others.

A Word to Pakistan

"You have heard of the cowardly attack on the Sikhs in Karachi. Innocent men, women and children were butchered, looted and others have had to flee. Now comes the news of an attack on a refugee train at Gujarat. The train was carrying non-Muslim refugees from the Frontier Province. Large numbers are reported to have been killed and women abducted. It distresses me. How long can the Union put up with such things? How long can I bank upon the patience of the Hindus and Sikhs in spite of my fast? Pakistan has to put a stop to this state of affairs. They must purify their hearts and pledge themselves that they will not rest till the Hindus and Sikhs can return and live in safety in Pakistan.

"Supposing that there is a wave of self-purification throughout India, Pakistan will become *pak*. It will be a State in which past wrongs will have been forgotten, past distinctions will have been buried, the least and the smallest in Pakistan will command the same respect and the same protection of life and property that the Qaid-e-Azam enjoys. Such Pakistan can never die. Then and not till then shall I repent that I ever called it a sin, as I am afraid I must hold today, it is. I want to live to see that Pakistan not on paper, not in the orations of Pakistani orators, but in the daily life of every Pakistani Muslim. Then the inhabitants of the Union will forget that there ever was any enmity between them and if I am not mistaken, the Union will proudly copy Pakistan and if I am alive I

shall ask her to excel Pakistan in well-doing. The fast is a bid for nothing less. Be it said to the shame of those of us who are in the Union that we have readily copied Pakistan's bad manners.

MY DREAM

"Before I ever knew anything of politics in my early youth, I dreamt the dream of communal unity of the heart. I shall jump in the evening of my life, like a child, to feel that the dream has been realized in this life. The wish for living the full span of life portrayed by the seers of old and which they permit us to set down at 125 years, will then revive. Who would not risk sacrificing his life for the realization of such a dream? Then we shall have real Swaraj. Then though legally and geographically we may still be two States, in daily life no one will think that we were separate States. The vista before me seems to me to be, as it must be to you, too glorious to be true. Yet like a child in a famous picture, drawn by a famous painter, I shall not be happy till I have got it. I live and want to live for no lesser goal. Let the seekers from Pakistan help me to come as near the goal as it is humanly possible. A goal ceases to be one, when it is reached. The nearest approach is always possible. What I have said holds good irrespective of whether others do it or not. It is open to every individual to purify himself or herself so as to render him or her fit for that land of promise. I remember to have read, I forget whether in the Delhi Fort or the Agra Fort, when I visited them in 1896, a verse on one of the gates, which when translated reads: 'If there is paradise on earth, it is here, it is here, it is here.' That Fort with all its magnificence at its best, was no paradise in my estimation. But I should love to see that verse with justice inscribed on the gates of Pakistan at all the entrances. In such paradise, whether it is in the Union or in Pakistan, there will be neither paupers nor beggars, nor high nor low, neither millionaire employers nor half-starved employees, nor intoxicating drinks or drugs. There will be the same respect for women as vouchsafed to men and the chastity and purity of men and women will be jealously guarded. Where every woman except one's wife, will be treated by men of all religions, as mother, sister or daughter according to her age. Where there will be no untouchability and where there will be equal respect for all faiths. They will be all proudly, joyously and voluntarily bread labourers. I hope everyone who listens to me or reads these lines will forgive me if stretched on my bed and basking in the sun, inhaling life-giving sunshine, I allow myself to indulge in this ecstasy. Let this assure the doubters and sceptics that I have not the slightest desire that the fast should be ended as quickly as possible. It matters little if the ecstatic wishes of a fool like me are never realized and the fast is never broken. I am content to wait as long as it may be necessary, but it will hurt me to think that people have acted merely in order to save me. I claim that God has inspired this fast and it will be broken only when and if he wishes it. No human agency has ever been known to thwart, nor will it ever thwart Divine Will.'

ISLAM AND IDOL WORSHIP

Islam is strictly a monotheistic faith. It prohibits idol worship. It enjoins upon its followers the worship only of the 'One Supreme God'. Under the conditions then prevailing in Arabia and the world around, the Prophet realized that the root cause of the people's weakness, degradation and misfortunes was the multiplicity of their gods and their many superstitious beliefs and practices. All through his life he preached against these evils and laboured to bring all men round to the simple worship of the One True God.

This preaching was by no means new in religious history. In recent times in India, Kabir Sahib, and Guru Nanak, Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Swami Dayananda have openly and even vehemently preached against all forms of idolatry. In his well-known Persian letter to Aurangazeb the last of the Sikh Gurus has with justifiable pride styled himself a *butshikan*, i. e. an iconoclast. Hundreds of saint-reformers, especially since the fifteenth century, have preached the same thing all over the country.

But on account of the sad doings of some over-zealous and fanatic Muslim rulers, Islam has, in the eyes of many people, become associated with a type of aggressive and offensive iconoclasm. Unfortunately a number of educated Musalmans also take pride in such acts of their supposed heroes. Let us, therefore, try to find out the actual position of Islam in this matter, and the example the Prophet has set before us.

The *Quran* definitely enjoins upon its followers "not to speak ill of those (gods, goddesses, idols etc.) whom other people worship besides God (6-107)." Hence, offering insult to or breaking an idol, which any person adores, is against the injunctions of the *Quran*.

Just a few years before the birth of the Prophet, the Christian Governor of the Province of Yaman, which was then under the Emperor of Abyssinia, invaded and tried to demolish the great temple of the *Kaba* which contained 360 idols worshipped by the people of Mecca and adjoining territories. This act of the Governor has been referred to in the *Quran* as sacrilegious and the calamity which overtook the infidel invaders has been described as 'God-sent punishment'.

Let us now look to the example set by the Prophet. During the first thirteen years of his career as the Messenger of God, the Prophet always performed his *namaz*, whenever possible, within the precincts of the *Kaba*, and advised his followers accordingly. But never once did he offer any insult to any of the idols in the building, nor did he allow any of his followers to do so. Whenever he referred to the *Kaba*, he did so in language full of respect, and whenever he tried to wean the people from the worship of the idols, he did so in the sweetest manner possible.

Six years after his voluntary exile from Mecca, the Prophet again visited the sacred city at the

head of about 1400 Musalmans, all unarmed as was the custom for the pilgrims. The Prophet claimed for himself and his people the right of pilgrimage to the *Kaba*. There were negotiations with the *Quresh*. An agreement was arrived at. The Musalmans had to go back, but could return for the pilgrimage the next year and stay in the city for three days. Accordingly the Prophet again visited Mecca the next year at the head of about 2000 Muslims. For three days the Prophet and his followers stayed in the sacred city, and performed all the ceremonies of the pilgrimage including seven times going round the *Kaba*, when all the 360 idols were there. The Musalmans went round the *Kaba* all right. The idols were inside and could not be seen. But when they came to perform the ceremonies pertaining to the sacred hills of *Safa* and *Merva*, the Musalmans hesitated, because the two idols on those hills were in the open and visible. Just then a fresh revelation was added to the *Quran* — "There is no blame on those who go round *Safa* and *Merva* as these two are among the signs of God."

Before his followers entered Mecca, the Prophet had instructed them not to commit an act or say a word that might wound the feelings of any of the worshippers at the sacred house (*Bukhari*). The instructions were fully carried out. It was this exemplary tolerance, this high regard for the feelings of others, which during the next few years, brought the whole of Mecca within the pale of Islam.

On the occasion of the Prophet's next visit to Mecca, each one of the 360 idols was removed from its place of honour and put aside, under the Prophet's orders. But these orders were given only when all Mecca had embraced Islam, and when hardly a man was left throughout Arabia who cared for the old worship.

Tufail, the chief of the Banu Doss tribe, was allowed to burn the 'log of wood' which his tribe used to worship, only when the entire tribe had embraced Islam and none believed any longer in the worship of the old God.

Ayash, when deputed to go and preach Islam to the three great tribes of Yaman, was definitely instructed by the Prophet to set fire to the three sticks before which the people prayed, only when they had all given up idol worship and had adopted in its stead the worship of the 'One True God'.

Examples can be multiplied. Destruction of a material object of worship is permitted in Islam only when none is left who believes in that worship, and then too with the consent of those who once worshipped it. As the ruler of Arabia, the Prophet again and again declared it the duty of the Musalmans to protect the places of worship of non-Muslims who had entered into any sort of terms with the Government of Medina, even when those places were full of idols which people worshipped.

We repeat. Islam is strictly monotheistic. It prohibits idol worship as do so many other Indian and foreign creeds. Yet all insult to idols worshipped by others, much more breaking of them, whether by a past arrogant ruler or a present misguided fanatic, is against the injunctions of the *Quran*, against the example set by the Prophet and a disgrace to that great faith.

So far we have described the spirit of Islam proper. As for the *Sufis*, they go even a step further. The universally respected saint Muhibullah Ilahabadi, when questioned by Dara as to the true meaning of 'La-Ilah-ill-Allah' said that it meant — there is no object of worship but God, i. e. that all objects of worship are God. Dara again asked if the three famous deities of pre-Islamic Arabia, viz. Lat, Uza and Mannat were also God. Muhibullah answered in the affirmative and explained how after all it was a matter of emphasis and outlook. Similarly, the great and learned author of the well-known *Sufi* book named *Mashhad-i-naz*, also called *Gulshan-i-raz*, when asked about the nature of an idol and of the sacred thread, replied as follows:

> "The idol is the symbol of the love and unity of God.
> "The putting on of the sacred thread is the girding up of loins for the service of God.
> "All objects are but manifestations of the same One Existence,
> "The idol is also one among those objects.
> "The worshipper of an idol was called a *kafir* in Islamic law,
> "Only because he did not see in the idol anything but the outward form.
> "Thou too, wilt not deserve to be called a Muslim,
> "If thou dost not soon perceive the God of Truth hidden behind the idol."

New Delhi, 3-1-'48 SUNDARLAL

GANDHI'S CHALLENGE TO CHRISTIANITY

By

S. K. George

With Forewords

By

Prof. S. Radhakrishnan

and

Mr. Horace Alexander

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"A NATIONAL COMMUNITY"

Prof. Muhmmad Habib is one of those men whose faith in the unity of India has survived great ordeals and even persecution. He is Professor of History at the Aligarh Muslim University. He is a man of deep scholarship. In December last he presided over the tenth session of the Indian History Congress at Bombay. In the course of his address he is reported to have said:

> "The Unity of India has been one of the fundamental postulates of Indian moral consciousness, and the longing for a centralized administration one of the most visible and persistent demands of the political spirit of the Indians throughout the ages. The breaking up of India into two separate States or law-making organizations with exclusive citizenship, . . . and the monstrosity of the establishment of States on purely religious and communal basis, have never been known to the history of our land."

He declares that

> "The reunion of India should be one of our primary aims."

He also says that

> "If the universal verdict of history is of any value, this reunion should be brought about by peaceful methods. . . . . Force in modern times creates more problems than it solves, and the alternative to peace is death."

Prof. Habib believes that "wise, statesmanlike and patient guidance, even on one side," will inevitably lead us to this goal. He speaks of the religious and cultural tolerance of ancient India, and says that "religious persecution is totally alien to the spirit of our land." He suggests the creation of "a national culture group", or "a national community" "which may inherit all that is best in the culture groups of old", and the development of a common "Indian culture."

Prof. Habib's language all through is that of a true son of the soil, taking just pride in all its past history. With regard to the 'reunion of India', we may make it clear that non-Muslims never wanted partition. It was only the Muslims who did it, barring, of course, sections like the Nationalists, the Ahrars, the Ulemas and others. Again, partition was demanded in the interests, real or supposed, of the Musalmans of India. It is, therefore, for the Muslims, if and when they may be so minded, to say that they want reunion. Any such movement among the Hindus may only increase difficulties and postpone indefinitely the fulfilment of Prof. Habib's desire. The best thing that the non-Muslims, and especially the Hindus, can do in the meantime is to find out and eliminate from their own thought and practice all that may have contributed to the birth of the two-nation theory. They must purify their hearts of all anger, all hatred, all feelings of revenge or retaliation, and untouchability in its manyfold forms. They must do their best to see that both the sister-Dominions — so long as they are separate — are happy, prosperous and friendly to each other. It is perfectly right that if the reunion is ever to come for the good of the down-trodden millions, it must be through 'peaceful means', i. e. through non-violence.

As for Prof. Habib's desire for 'a national culture group', 'a national country' and a common 'Indian culture', the entire trend of Indian history is in that direction and destiny points to no other goal. For this too we should like to make a few suggestions. The boycott of the *Urdu* script by the Governments of the United Provinces and Behar is wrong. Equally wrong is the desire to over-sanskritize the common national language of India. These reactionary steps, taken in a spirit of anger and retaliation, conscious or unconscious, are bound to be retraced. But in the meantime why should not our Muslim brethren help by exhibiting better sense and greater toleration? If in the past an AlBerouni or a Faizi could pride himself on his Sanskrit learning, if Khusro, Rahim and Raskhan could be regarded as progenitors of Hindi language and literature, if even today a Nazrul Islam can compose much more sanskritized Bengalee poetry than any Hindu, and a Mirza Abul Fazal can translate all the four *Vedas* from original Sanskrit, again if Musalmans can take pride in their knowledge of the English language, why should not every Indian Muslim, in this critical hour of our country's life, make it a point to learn the *Nagari* script and try to acquire a knowledge of Hindi language and literature comparable to that of any Hindu? Surely, nobody can kill the Urdu language or literature if only those Hindus and Muslims, who know its beauty and utility, whatever their number, decide to keep it alive. The present phase of communal fanaticism and madness must pass, unless we are to perish under its dead weight. But we are confident that it is only thus that our Muslim brethren can help in that consummation.

One more point. Educated Muslims can talk appreciatively of Jalinoos and Aristotle, of Plato and Socrates, but not so of Dhanvantari and Kanada, of Gautama and Patanjali. The former were Greeks and the latter Indians, all equally honoured names in the realms of medicine, science and philosophy. All were equally non-Muslims or even equally idol worshippers. We hope that the neglect is not deliberate. It is due to lack of knowledge. We may not go into other causes at present. But the defect has to be cured. Similar things may be said of the Hindus. If all of us, Hindus, Muslims and others in this country, really develop a common Indian outlook and a common Indian culture of Prof. Habib's dream, then and only then can we contribute our due share to the development of a world culture and of human brotherhood.

New Delhi, 11-1-'48 SUNDARLAL

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